

# Nation

**Skins,  
feathers  
and fur**  
Three Native  
designers

**Canada fails  
at UN Summit**

**Healing the  
Nishiyuu**



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Cree Nation Government  
Gouvernement de la Nation Crie  
CAPITAL WORKS & SERVICES

# BUILDING OUR CREE NATION MEET OUR NEW CREE FIREFIGHTER INSTRUCTORS



Back row: Marcel Wapachee, Acting Fire Chief, Nemaksa; George Cox, Regional Fire Prevention Officer; Timothy Stringer, Fire Chief, Waswanipi; Lee Roy Blacksmith, Fire Marshall; Donovan Lameboy, Chisasibi; Willy Bosum, Ouje Bougoumou; Front row: Keith Boswell, Instructor, JIBC; Roger Weapenicappo, Fire Chief Eastmain; Brian Atchynia, Fire Chief, Whapmagoostui; Kurtis Black, Waskaganish; Charles House, Chisasibi; Arnold Lazare, Instructor, MCK; Tracy Iserhoff, Mistissini

In July of this year, eleven (11) certified firefighters from different communities in our Cree Nation participated in a Firefighters' Instructor program. The NFPA 1041IS an internationally recognized program that was delivered under the auspices of the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC) in Kahnawake.

This program accredited our Cree Firefighters to teach new trainees to become certified firefighters giving them the fundamentals of

learning theory and interpersonal communications. The program taught our group how to manage a learning environment, student behavior and how to develop lesson plans.

The most important aspects for our Cree instructors was learning to schedule, supervise, evaluate and analyze - the four basic techniques for developing first class instructors. It also taught them classroom and practical training, managing resources and record keeping

systems. They now have the fundamentals of Instructing and have already been hired by the Cree Nation Government for our Coastal and Inland Training Firefighters' Training Program. In the very near future they will be managing their own training programs in all our Cree communities.

It is one more step forward to building our Cree Nation and we are very proud of their achievement.

## Canada fails at WCIP

by Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come

The historic two-day World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) began September 22 at the United Nations General Assembly in New York City.

I and other Indigenous leaders attended with heads of government, ambassadors and ministers to witness and contribute to a new chapter of our history. We went to celebrate Indigenous peoples' human rights and new and renewed commitments by states in international law.

Unfortunately, Canada's prime minister did not attend. Nor did any minister from the Harper government. Since its election in 2006, the government has refused to acknowledge within Canada that Indigenous peoples' collective rights are human rights.

The idea for this conference arose in 1993 at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Austria. However, it was Indigenous leader Evo Morales who worked to achieve the WCIP. Upon his election as President of Bolivia in 2006, he pledged to propose a WCIP. His efforts resulted in the General Assembly officially agreeing to hold a WCIP in 2014.

The highlight was the General Assembly's adoption by consensus of an Outcome Document, which includes the commitments of states on a wide range of issues, including: Indigenous youth; health; language and culture; access to justice; and violence and discrimination against Indigenous peoples and individuals, in particular, women.

The centrepiece of the Outcome Document is, of course, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In his opening remarks, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared: "I am proud that the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples during my first year in office. That set minimum standards for the survival, dignity and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. ... And we are joining forces with Indigenous peoples to reach our common goals."

Regretfully, Canada was the only state in the world to request an explanation of vote (EOV). In regard to the Outcome Document,

Canada claimed it cannot accept the two paragraphs on "free, prior and informed consent," which is widely accepted in international law. Canada implied consent may constitute some kind of absolute "veto", but never explained what the term means. Canada also objected to the commitment "to uphold the principles of the Declaration," since it was somehow incompatible with Canada's constitution.

These arguments are false. They contradict Canada's own endorsement of the UN Declaration in 2010, which concluded: "We are now confident that Canada can interpret the principles expressed in the Declaration in a manner that is consistent with our Constitution and legal framework." Canada failed to disclose this to the General Assembly.

In so doing, Canada misled the General Assembly, member states and Indigenous peoples globally. Canada failed to uphold the honour of the Crown. Such actions against the human rights of Indigenous peoples betray Canada's constitution. Good governance is not possible without respect and protection for Indigenous peoples' human rights. Harmonious and cooperative relations – also highlighted in the UN Declaration – require no less.

For years, the Harper government has refused to consult Indigenous rights-holders on crucial issues, especially when it involves international forums. This repeated failure to consult violates Canada's duty under Canadian constitutional and international law.

In his opening remarks, the UN Secretary-General declared to Indigenous peoples from all regions of the world that we "will always have a home at the United Nations." Yet, here at home in Canada, the federal government refuses to respect democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

For 30 years, the James Bay Cree have always defended and advanced Indigenous peoples' rights at the UN and other international forums. And we will continue to achieve success. Canada's low standards have not and cannot prevent the increasing influence of the UN Declaration in Canada and worldwide.

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Manitobah Mukluks



## Hi-tech in the goose blind

by Sonny Orr

The snow was coming down hard on this early September morning. Winds were gusting and howling like the proverbial banshee, and furious cloud formations starkly contrasted the snow and created a false sense of darkness. A small flock of Canada geese showed up low on the horizon, doggedly fighting strong winds, bobbing up and down and looking like they would turn and fly off.

Several minutes later, the small flock came within shooting range. The guns around the small pond went off like muffled silenced shots and geese fell from the sky onto the moss-covered grounds. It's fall goose hunting season and the geese are around, feeding on the amazing bounty that Mother Nature provided that day.

Happily, we gathered our kill, some which were still running around the bushes and hiding from our supper plate. Such is the life of the northern hunter. Weather or no weather, we still go out.

Further south, our cousins are taking the big game of moose to the next level, using today's technology to attract our food of the lands. Yes, the iPod has now entered the Cree hunting tradition, with all kinds of hunting calls blasting from a Bluetooth speaker. This gadget seemed to work, as the hapless geese turned from their southern trajectory to land in our pond. The same for the moose hunter; gone are the days of the massive thumb and endless calling into the darkness, luring moose out from their homes and into waiting gun sights.

Back in the day, we only had our throat to call game. There were no fancy contraptions. When you think of it, using two hands on the gun and another hand on a wild game caller seemed a little tricky to carry out without losing valuable seconds you have to pull the trigger.

Today's modern hunter welcomes every new trick of the trade to pull in their prey, but it all boils down to outsmarting the already smart goose and moose. As many other animals and species on this earth, we have adapted to accommodate modern lifestyles.

One of my nephews, with four goose calls hanging from his neck, looked over to me and asked me where my callers were. I pointed to my throat and grin. This is all I ever needed to get by.

I am not the best or even close to being damn good at hunting, but I know one thing for sure, when the iPod and Bluetooth speaker runs out of power, it's back to the old-fashioned way of calling.

I recommended that a motorized floating decoy be next on the list of hunting gadgets to acquire, but that was met with guffaws and smirks. What, a battery-operated decoy? What next?

Soon, another flock of geese flew by and the barrage of electronic calls echoed throughout the lands. Did it work? Not according to my gun, which didn't even get close to getting loaded for this flock.

Sadly, the sun soon set and it was no longer legal to hunt. We headed home, happy with the kill of this day. A few hours later, satisfied with the boiled goose and delicious dumplings, my eyes closed at 10:00pm, only to open again at 4:30 the next morning. Another day of hunting, and yes, it was snowing again.

If only the weather would stay lousy enough for the rest of the week and keep me out of the indoors long enough to appreciate the warmth of a fire and the smell of fresh Labrador tea and bannock. Yes, the outdoors belongs to me now, at least for the next week or two....

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# Global rights

## Indigenous peoples gather for historic conference at UN

by Nathan McDonnell

UN Media-Rick Bajornas



Tadodaho Sid Hill, Chief of the Onondaga Nation, delivers the ceremonial welcome to participants at the opening of Conference.



UN Media-Rick Bajornas

Participants spent two days discussing the rights of indigenous peoples.

On September 22-23, the United Nations hosted the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WIPC). The two-day high-level plenary meeting gathered over a thousand Indigenous and non-Indigenous delegates from Indigenous communities, organizations and member states to discuss the rights of Indigenous peoples.

"Together, let us recognize and celebrate the valuable and distinctive identities of Indigenous peoples around the world," implored UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as he opened the conference.

Flanked by General Assembly President Sam Kutesa and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, Ki-moon reminded the delegates that their discussions and conclusions would reverberate across the international

community with concrete effects in the lives of Indigenous people.

Discussion focused on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the General Assembly in 2007. The culmination of the conference was summarized in the Outcome Document, a statement formed by consensus across the two-day discussions.

Alberto Saldamando, a Mexican activist for Indigenous rights said he was inspired by the water ceremony at the Hudson River conducted by First Nations women who walked around the Great Lakes. "Experiences like that really energize you," he said.

On the Outcome Document of the Conference, Saldamando was satisfied but not enthusiastic. "It's good because it doesn't do any harm." His lukewarm praise is due to the fact that, while it is "comprehensive and

good as a checklist," the document is merely voluntary and unenforceable upon member states and corporations. He did, however, celebrate the inclusion of the importance of the necessity of "free, prior and informed consent" in protecting Indigenous land rights.

Mohawk and Algonquin Grand Chief Guillaume Carle concurred with Saldamando's reservations, deploring that a lack of implementation and sanctions makes it toothless. He was also fiercely critical of Canada being the only member state not to adhere to the document, a refusal which resulted in a rare footnote recording the Harper government's opposition. "How does Canada not respect such a big democracy as the UN?" Carle wondered.

Colombian researcher Valentina Pellegrino brought her experience working with the Indigenous peoples

of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountains. Though excited to meet and share with others working for Indigenous rights, she was concerned that it is not a critical space but rather “a lot of nice talk.”

The Equator Prize, a biennial honour that recognizes 25 Indigenous communities for local sustainable development solutions, was awarded September 22. Guests at the sold-out ceremony included former US Vice President Al Gore, who reminded the audience that Indigenous peoples are the ones hardest hit by climate change. Occurring on the night before the UN Climate Summit, the Equator Prize Award ceremony was also a rallying cry in a week that saw a frenzy of activity around climate change.

In anticipation of the Climate Summit, on September 21, the

People's Climate March was organized to rally concerned citizens, adding to a busy week of activity in New York. The diverse mobilization involved Indigenous peoples, front-line communities, environmentalists, students, scientists, families, the elderly, unions, anti-capitalists, community groups, vegans and faith groups.

Estimates of the numbers attending the march are between 310,000 and 400,000, marking it as the biggest climate march in history.

The following day, September 22, witnessed a non-violent “Flood Wall Street” action that saw thousands of activists disrupting the financial district. Invoking the November 2012 flooding of New York City during Hurricane Sandy, it was a reminder of the stakes that face both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.



Tadodaho Sid Hill, Chief of the Onondaga Nation, delivers the ceremonial welcome to participants at the opening of of Conference.

UN Media-Rick Bajornas

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# Whose land is it?

## Buffalo Point women challenge unelected, non-Native chief

By Joel Barde

A recent Buffalo Point council meeting saw the arrest of four community members, including an 86-year-old Elder.

The four are opposed to the unelected chief of the 140-member nation, and were arrested for breaking a court order that bans them from entering public spaces on the southern Manitoba reserve.

They say Chief John Thunder – the ruling, non-Indigenous, hereditary chief of the nation – is misappropriating federal funding to support his family businesses and turning the nation's formerly bucolic setting into cottage territory for wealthy Manitobans.

Thunder was recently charged with extortion. RCMP investigators believe Thunder attempted to pressure Manitoba Senator Don Plett into intervening into a property tax battle involving cottage owners.

Andrea Camp, one of the four arrested women, has been voted chief in unrecognized, independent elections. She told CBC News that the four decided to risk arrest in order to learn more details about the charges facing Thunder.

"I just said, 'You know, they're not going to tell us what happened,'" said Camp. "The only way we can exercise our right to even know anything is to go to the band office."

According to Terry Nelson, Grand Chief of Manitoba's Southern Chiefs Association, Buffalo Point Indigenous people have been asking for democratic elections for 40 years.

He says nothing will be resolved until the federal government outlines a way for the nation to move away from a hereditary system – called Custom Code Governance System in federal government parlance – in favour of a democratically elected one.

"They never answer the fundamental question," said Nelson. "How does a community get out of the custom code governance system?"

Chief Thunder's father, Jim Thunder, also served as chief of Buffalo Point. Jim was the non-Native stepson of Shorty Thunder, the last democratically elected, Ojibawa chief.

Nelson says that both Jim and John Nelson have favoured development over community projects, and



Kari Cobiness, Helen Cobiness, Brittany Cobiness and Andrea Camp (from left)

have little regard for the well being of Buffalo Point's Indigenous people.

"They came in and took over the reserve, and started selling off the land. People who bought up land came from Steinbach, Manitoba. Many are very powerful members of parliament."

Last year, the Southern Chiefs Association took the formal step of recognizing Camp as chief of the Buffalo Point First Nation. But until the federal government recognizes her as one, that designation has little impact within Buffalo Point.

For Nelson, the federal government's inaction smacks of hypocrisy, supporting an unelected, unaccountable leader while constantly chastising First Nations and First Nations organizations for a lack of accountability.

For Nelson, the reason is clear.

"There are 400 cottage owners who are white people who vote. The government says, 'We can't do anything here. We might have to do something against the white cottage owners.' That's a fear they have. So they support the unelected official."

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs did not return e-mails regarding this story.

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Dear Editor:

First, thank you for publishing our family's earlier "Letter to the Editor" on The Nation's webpage on August 4, in which we presented our proposal for a resolution concerning section 3.2.7 of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) or "the 10-year clause." Secondly, thank you to my fellow Eeyouch/Eenouch, for voting to pass the proposed resolution at the Annual General Assembly in Waswanipi on August 7, 2014.

To many of you who individually approached my family and I to express their support and encouragement, thank you. Your shared concerns touched us and confirmed that this issue is one that affects many of our families. It is rewarding to know that our efforts will ensure that other Cree youth are not wrongfully denied post-secondary education assistance or other rights or benefits guaranteed by the JBNQA.

However, the follow-up article (Looking for resolution, Vol. 21, No. 22) in the September 5 edition of the Nation contains several errors. It falsely states that Jenna and I maintain close ties to Mistissini and that my parents still live there. In fact, our ties are with Chisasibi. My surname is "Willis Newton," not "Newton." Also, Jenna did not claim that her grandparents are unable to speak Cree. Her grandparents, Janie and Roderick Pachano, are fluent Cree speakers. The Corporate Secretary of the Grand Council of the Crees (of Eeyou Istchee)/Cree Nation

Government (GCC(EI)/CNG) is referred to as the "Commerce Secretary." The Chairperson of the Cree School Board (CSB) is Kathleen Wootton, not "Wooten."

The story also fails to make some important points. For example, the author fails to challenge Ms. Wootton's position that an amendment of the 10-year clause is necessary in order for the CSB to provide post-secondary financial assistance to Cree beneficiaries who have not been absent from the Territory during 10 continuous years. A reading of the 10-year clause supports the interpretation that Cree beneficiaries who are domiciled outside Eeyou Istchee remain entitled to their rights and benefits under the JBNQA unless they are "absent from the Territory during 10 continuous years."

Ms. Wootton's statement that the CSB will continue to stick to its restrictive policy on the 10-year clause, regardless of the resolution adopted at the General Assembly, is troubling. The CSB should be accountable to the members of the Cree Nation Government. Her stance that the CSB must restrict the number of Crees who receive post-secondary funding because Quebec and Canada will cut the program if they do not is without merit. Canada and Quebec have an obligation to continue to provide and fund the Cree School Board's post-secondary program under sections 16.0.22 and 16.0.24 of the JBNQA. This is a constitutionally protected treaty right.

Ms. Wootton's explanation that the Grand Chief and Corporate Secretary assured her that the resolution is simply "a nonbinding recommendation" is also very concerning. I hope it is not true. I hope that when our Grand Chief publicly stated that he supported the resolution before it was voted on that he meant what he said and, even if he didn't, that he will act responsibly and carry out the mandate of his people.

According to the article, Acting Chief Allan Jolly's experience with past General Assembly resolutions is that they are often ignored. I was very discouraged when two former Cree Chiefs told me the same thing immediately after the General Assembly. I want my daughters and other youth who witnessed self-government in action at the General Assembly to believe that we the people have a real role in our nation building.

The people have spoken. By its plain terms, the resolution "mandates" the Board of the GCC(EI)/CNG to adopt the uniform interpretation of the 10-year clause set out in the resolution and to take prompt steps to work with the CSB and other entities to ensure those agencies implement the uniform interpretation.

The Board must understand that ignoring the resolutions passed by our people is no longer an option. In this new era of self-government, we expect more and will accept no less.

Respectfully,  
Joanne Willis Newton



www.tundracomics.com

# Of skins and feathers and fur

## *Three Native designers*

by Amy German

WHETHER THEIR COLLECTIONS ARE BEING PERFECTED FOR A FASHION WEEK RUNWAY SHOW IN NEW YORK CITY OR BEING TAILORED TO THE NEEDS OF CREE WOMEN IN JAMES BAY, CANADA'S NATIVE DESIGN SCENE IS MORE PROLIFIC THAN EVER.

WHILE TRADITIONAL GARB LIKE MUKLUKS, MOCCASINS AND HIDE GARMENTS ARE STAPLES, DURING THE LAST FEW DECADES DESIGNERS HAVE CROSSED OVER INTO HAUTE COUTURE THAT IS WORN BY SOME OF THE WORLD'S FOREMOST FASHION MODELS AND SOLD BY CANADA'S TOP RETAILERS.

IN AN INDUSTRY THAT KNOWN FOR EATING ITS YOUNG, WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE IT, SURVIVE AND THEN SHOWCASE A NATION'S UNIQUE CULTURAL PRIDE? TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION, THREE DIFFERENT INDIGENOUS DESIGNERS TELL THEIR STORIES.

### MANITOBAH MUKLUKS

**A**ccording to Manitobah Mukluks Communications Director Tara Barnes, her company's development is a unique tale of Canadian pride. Métis founder Sean McCormick started from humble origins to turn the company into a global brand that is worn by celebrities and models around the world.

Barnes said McCormick was operating a family business at a trading post in Brandon in the 1990s. Back then he traded tanned hides for traditionally made women's mukluks. But he couldn't keep up with the demand for the boots as they were selling so quickly.

This gave McCormick the incentive to go into business for himself, as clearly there was a market for these products.

"I've worn them since I was young; they were part of my culture and upbringing. I was also in the tanning business so I knew a lot about leather and fur. I have a fairly entrepreneurial nature, so I put it all together to start a business. The idea was to have an Aboriginal brand and I started with mukluks and moccasins because that was what I knew best," said McCormick.

As Barnes explained, there were no Aboriginal manufacturers in Canada at that time.

"One day (in 2006) fashion model Kate Moss was photographed wearing a pair of his mukluks in London, England, and suddenly mukluks boomed. Sean immediately had to pick up his production and move it to a larger city and get more staff to be able to create more volume," said Barnes.

The company has been growing by 50% each of the last five years, said Barnes, becoming one of the few Aboriginal companies to make the Profit 500 as one of Canada's fastest-growing companies. As there are no other shoe companies on this list, Barnes said that this makes them the fastest-growing shoe company in Canada and likely the largest Aboriginal shoe company in the world.









From the Chairperson of the Board of Compensation and Creco Inc., Board Members and staff

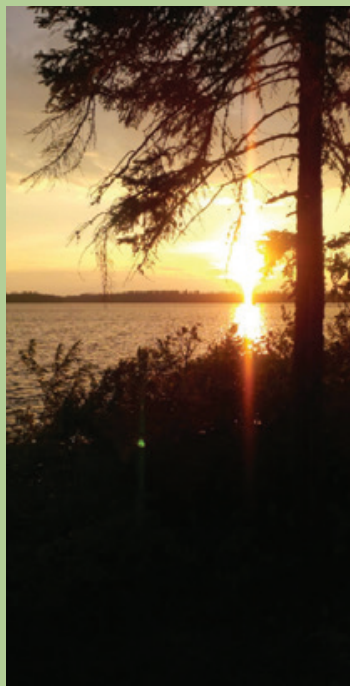
## Back to school



Well it's that time of year again: Summer has gone by so quickly and with autumn upon us, it's Back to School for students. Whether back to elementary, secondary, vocational, college or University classes, you are all on your way to greater heights. We wish you all a successful 2014-2015 school year!

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## Moose Break



Moose season is here! It is a favorite time of the year for many of us, so for all of you on your mighty moose hunt, we wish you a blessed time on the land with your family and friends. Have a safe moose hunt!

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## Announcement of Business Development Liaison



The Cree Regional Economic Enterprises Company Inc. (CREECO) is pleased to announce the recent hiring of **Ms. Rachel Etapp as the "Business Development Liaison" of CREECO.**

Ms. Etapp brings to CREECO a work history that includes employment with various Cree entities in Economic Development. Ms. Etapp has earned collegial diplomas in Social Science and the other one in Marketing and Sales and more recently a "Bachelor of Business Administration".

Rachel Etapp's email: [retapp@boc-creco.ca](mailto:retapp@boc-creco.ca)

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Barnes says the appeal comes from the fact their mukluks are made from natural materials such as sheepskin, fur and suede. These natural materials breathe and allow the foot to stay warm in temperatures as cold as -30 Celsius.

The fashion industry has embraced the company as an authentic Aboriginal brand rather than a company that makes shoes “inspired” by Aboriginal designs.

McCormick is happy to share these elements of Aboriginal culture with the world.

“That is my favourite part,” said McCormick. “I love that the mainstream wants to engage with my culture. I see it as an entry point that can foster relationships between people and lead to better understanding. Maybe it’s idealistic, but I hope I can play a small part in solving some the bigger issues that face our communities, and this is one way to start.”

Barnes says the company provides good economic opportunities for its employees. Before Manitobah Mukluks came onto the scene, said Barnes, artisans were earning less than minimum wage at the prices their boots were selling.

Wanting to get artists’ prices for the artisans who were making what he saw as a “dying art,” McCormick began the story-boots project to promote the traditional art of mukluk and moccasin manufacturing.

After locating expert crafters from across Canada, the company devoted a webpage to help artisans sell their products and take home 100% of the profits. Manitobah Mukluks does not profit from this project and some of the available items sell for prices between \$100 and \$1200.

“This project is really meant to further Sean’s vision of contributing to Aboriginal communities and keeping the art of making these items alive. It also really helps to differentiate between the manufactured context of mukluk-making as we are trying to make a functional winter boot versus the art of mukluk-making that is passed down from generation to generation,” said Barnes.

For artists who want to do this fulltime and can produce the necessary volumes, Barnes said this project could become very lucrative. The company is always looking for more Aboriginal artisans.

As the company grows and its product reaches more markets, this producer of Canada’s iconic winter boots hopes to become what the Ugg boot was for Australia.

While the company now offers gear ideal for all-year wear, Barnes said the company’s goal is to represent Aboriginal culture on the world stage. And they want to do this by producing Aboriginal products made by Aboriginal people – all in the hopes of raising the standard of living in Aboriginal communities.





**R**achel Kawapit's journey to fulltime fashion designer began many years ago with a series of life decisions.

Since high school, Kawapit had worked in childcare in Whapmagoostui. But she was forced to leave her community in 2008 to obtain treatment for a daughter with special needs.

"I knew that there had to be something better out there for her – so I decided to take the plunge and move down south," she said.

In the south seeking services for her child, Kawapit decided to go back to school for the financial support it provided but especially to seek out new career opportunities.

Originally Kawapit entered a general arts program at Algonquin College, but her lifelong passion for sewing led her to the college's pre-design program. Kawapit first learned the skill while sewing mittens from scrap material while living out with her grandparents in the bush.

"My grandmother used to have one of those old-fashioned sewing machines that you would crank with the handle. This was my first time seeing a sewing machine and I was curious to know how it worked. Of course, my grandmother would tell me not to play with it, but the minute she turned her back I would," said Kawapit.

With her passion reignited, Kawapit looked around for programs in fashion design and applied to the Richard Robinson School Academy of Fashion Design in Ottawa.

While she was quite smitten with the school, especially after she saw the industrial sewing machines and other professional equipment that would be used for the class, life had other plans in store for her. Though she aced the entrance exam with flying colours and earned a personal invitation to study at the Academy by the school's founder, a spot in a specialized school for her daughter suddenly became available in Montreal.

In Montreal, Kawapit studied at LaSalle College two years, acquiring





a solid academic grounding about the industry and design. However, after two years Kawapit realized she couldn't bear being away from her other children any longer and returned to Whapmagoostui.

"One by one they left Montreal and returned home since they couldn't take the city life anymore and it became harder for me to be away from them. They really missed me and wanted me home," said Kawapit.

At first, Kawapit shelved her fashion pursuits upon returning to Whapmagoostui, but after a year she started to play with patterns and develop her own designs for parkas.

"My inspiration to start designing parkas came from our neighbours in Kuujuarapik. They are very talented at sewing and they make beautiful parkas, and this is where my curiosity stems from," said Kawapit.

At the same time, Kawapit said she wanted her designs to have more of a Cree influence and be suited to the needs of the women around her. As she played with her cutout patterns for parkas, she began to give these designs her own flare, using fur and feathers for adornments.

"What I heard from other Cree women was how they had a hard time finding things that fit properly. Since everyone has their own unique body and our midsections are not always that small, I wanted to develop something that would fit our body types," said Kawapit.

Kawapit set out to create a garment that was flattering, durable, culturally appropriate and that would meet the needs of her clientele in a James Bay winter. She succeeded.

Her designs are made from a special quilted material called "commander" that Picard buys in Montreal, which is basically the same



**RACHEL KAWAPIT**

fabric that Canada Goose parkas are made from. She said the high-quality fabric is Canadian made and ideal for the climate.

"I use a lot of fox fur or wolverine to trim the coats. I have coloured it. This is what makes my garments stand out and makes them elegant," said Kawapit.

Her production is about to as she finally left her childcare job to pursue her fashion design business fulltime.

"I want to design something that will make Cree women feel good and, as I mentioned earlier, I see the fur trim as the icing on the cake. The best part of making a parka for me is when I am putting on the fur. When I made my first parka and sewed the fur on, I felt like a million bucks because this is what makes it stand out and what makes it from me," said Kawapit.

After three years of working nights and weekends to pursue her dreams, Kawapit is now available fulltime to take orders. To contact her, look for her on Facebook where she is currently developing a page for her coats.

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**I**nnu fashion designer Kim Picard's passion for fashion and design was ignited at the age of nine when she discovered an old sewing machine in her mother's closet. After years of watching her grandmother sew various garments, crafts, quilts, moccasins, she covertly made a set of denim overalls for a teddy bear on the machine and took her very first steps on a journey that would lead her to become one of Quebec's foremost Aboriginal fashion designers.

"My mother came home that day and asked me where I had found those clothes for my bear. I told her that I made them and I haven't stopped sewing since," said Picard.

Inspired by her mother's passion for celebrity red carpets at award shows, Picard's desire to become a designer was ignited by an opportunity to work on costume creation for the Pessamit Inter-Band Games in 1994, when she worked with experienced professionals, Paul-Émile Dominique and his wife Madeleine. This led to her decision to enrol in the Fashion Design program at LaSalle College in Montreal.

While at LaSalle College, Picard made her first real foray into the world of fashion in the summer of 1996, working with Aboriginal designer D'Arcy Moses at the Natural Furs Company in Montreal. She then worked with Hélène De Grandpré, a designer who specialized in haute-couture wedding dresses and evening gowns. A later job was with Native Innovation Design, a Mohawk company that produced Native-inspired ready-to-wear clothing. During this time Picard also devoted a year to studying marketing at McGill University.

Once out of school, Picard worked for a variety of other fashion industry establishments. But a five-year break to work with youth inspired her to begin working for herself. She set up her own business, Kim Picard Designs, in 2010.

Picard said her cultural background is a well of inspiration for her fashion designs.

"I honour my ancestors when I make Native designs, especially when I create Innu designs. I grew up in the Innu way, I still speak my language and I am proud of it. I defined myself as Innu, this is who I am," explained Picard.

Picard says ideas often from her dreams and that she develops designs based on the animals and symbols she sees in her sleep.

Embedding the visions from her dreams into garments is something that comes from Innu tradition,



**KIM PICARD**

explained Picard. In the past, hunters would pass on these visions to the women, who would incorporate them into decorative traditional coats.

"This was believed to bring them luck and success in their hunt. Ochre, ink, fish eggs and other substances were used to colour them. These patterns and designs were meticulously crafted and by studying these patterns, colours and techniques to make these clothes, I learned what would help me realize my own dreams, to revive the clothes of my ancestors by giving them a contemporary form," said Picard.

Picard also experiments with other materials such as plastic, jute and aluminum. When Picard comes across a fabric that catches her eye, she can instantly see what it can be transformed into like a dress or a jacket.

"Sometimes I can design a garment before seeing the fabric. Inspiration can come from many places, sometimes from people, especially in big urban centres. I watch them walking on the streets and take in their style, personality and the colours they wear. These are things that constantly generate ideas in my mind," said Picard.





Picard also looks to mainstream designers such as Versace, McQueen and Cavalli. However, her grandmother still gives Picard her personal inspiration.

She also sees a political edge to her work. Picard believes that there is ignorance from non-Aboriginals, particularly when it concerns the meaning of some of the symbols that she uses in her designs.

“Aboriginal people generally know the meanings of these symbols – the properties of animals and their spir-

itual significance – but not all,” she explained. “There is still some teaching to do at this level because we lost so much of our traditional knowledge through colonization. For example, some symbols can represent clans or communities. Once non-Natives learn the meaning of the symbols on my clothes, they understand the approach and the fact that these garments hold a strong and significant message.”

# Healing the Nishiyuu

## Wemindji hosts a weekend of healing

by Jesse Staniforth

“The fire of the teepee, with the spruce boughs – oh, it was just beautiful! The smell of it! So close together. It was just so powerful!”

Christine Petawabano was excited as she recalled the Eeyou Healing Retreat – Chiiwaaschaouu Nishiyuu – Honouring the Journey of Hope at Wemindji’s traditional camp, held September 19-21. As the Mistissini coordinator for the Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association (CWEIA), Petawabano played a major role in organizing event.

She was far from alone. Before the retreat’s last day was even finished, social media lit up with praises for the experience.

The impetus for the event began last year, when the Nishiyuu trekkers completed their walk from Chisasibi to Mistissini for an end to violence against women in Cree communities.

“There was about probably close to 20 of them,” Petawabano remembered, “men from various communities starting arrived in Mistissini in September. That’s when they publicly apologized to women – to our mothers, and our sisters.”

For the CWEIA, the walk and the apology at the end of it were the beginning of something greater. At that organization’s Annual General Assembly last year, discussion began about organizing a conference to tackle some of the Cree Nation’s most difficult issues.

“One of the issues was reconciliation for men and women with the violence that had occurred for so many years with the apology from the Nishiyuu men,” said Petawabano.

“We wanted the Nishiyuu men to be one of our partners, instead



Left to right: Mervin Cheechoo, Abraham Bearskin, Carol Anne Cheechoo, Roger Orr, Wendy Hill, Matthew Mukash, Pat Blacksmith, Thomas Coon, Linda Shecapio, Jayson Caldera. Front row: Louisa Cookie Brown and Betty Albert

of just being separate, doing it alone. We wanted to work together with different organizations of the Cree Nation to show that this is what we need to do as a nation, to work together, not to do things independently or be competing with anybody. To have that communication, and to say, ‘Take my hand,’ or ‘Give us your hand, we can do this together.’”

Petawabano is also a part of the CWEIA’s Gender-Based Analysis project, a federally funded initiative designed to consider the different types of violence that women encounter versus the kinds of violence men experience, and then to determine the best possible tools and resources to help both genders heal from their trauma. She said she

brought that background into planning for the Healing Retreat.

The weekend was jam-packed with activities. There was a sunrise ceremony on the first day, and opening remarks, followed by a series of Elders who spoke each day on specific subjects, such as the culture of the Cree drum, or the meaning of the term “Nishiyuu.” There were many workshops on a wide variety of subjects. In the evening, there was good food, sharing circles for men, women, and groups, and sweat lodges. All of the weekend attempted to respectfully balance the needs and beliefs of those who practiced traditional Cree spirituality and those who follow the Christian path.



"It was really, really busy," said Petawabano. "From 6:30 in the morning right up until 10:30 at night. It was focused on you, just you: mind, body and soul. It was all self-care, inside and out. With the food, too. We didn't want heavy food, just healthy traditional foods and fruits and vegetables."

The weekend was also part spa: there was a massage therapist, along with reiki, yoga, reflexology foot massage and meditation. There was even a hairstylist who washed and cut attendees' hair at no charge. But there was also serious self-care being offered: traditional healers from Whapmagoostui offered one-on-one counselling in the Native spiritual tradition, while the Cree Health Board brought in a one-on-one counsellor for those dealing with the trauma of surviving Residential Schools.

The weekend ended with a feast of traditional food, a farewell, a gift exchange, ending with a concert by the legendary Fort George Rockers and a fiddle performance by former Grand Chief Matthew Mukash.

The real star of the weekend, however, was the spirit of togetherness that pervaded the whole gathering.

"Our creator was in favour of what we were doing," Petawabano said. "It was very spiritual. There were so many little stories that were a part of this. I'd see people in the corners of the room talking, close, and know their hearts were connecting. It was very beautiful. A lot of healing was taking place, and celebrations. The energy that was there – nobody had a personal agenda. There was no backstabbing or gossip or anger. I couldn't feel any negative energy. There was a lot of laughter and tears, and touching – many people holding hands."

The event was barely over when those who had participated began wondering when it would happen again. Some said they hoped similar events could be arranged in each of the Cree communities every year.

Petawabano's report on the event is due in late October, when she will make a presentation about the event highlighting its successes and failures. She will also review recommendations from attendees about how to improve future events.



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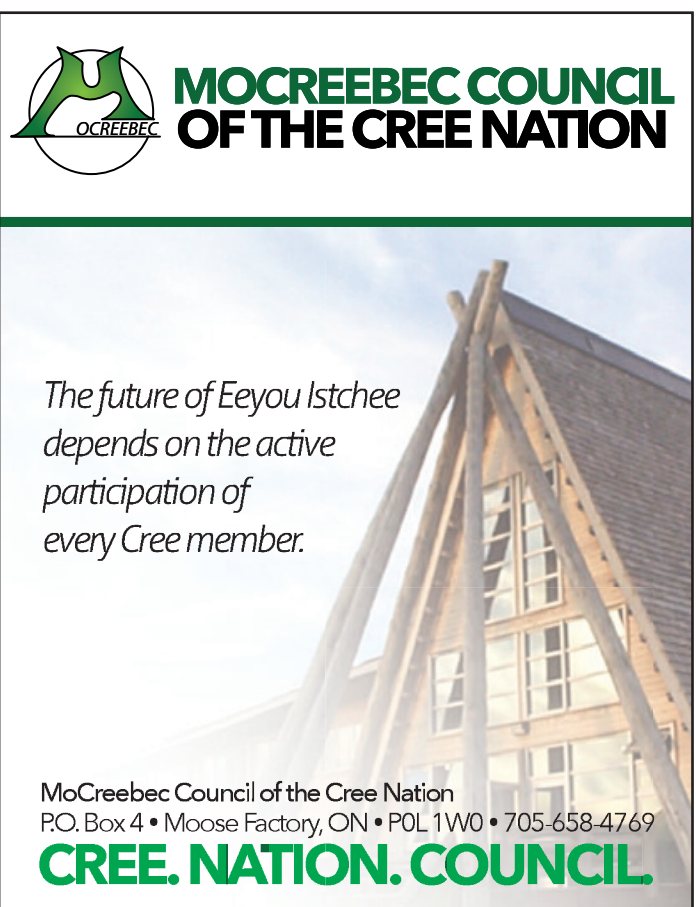
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Love poetry corset girls image



Even Sesame Street was representing

# A PARADE OF HEROES AND VILLAINS

Comiccon 2014 brings out the super, the scary and the sexy

by Amy German

It's about the only place on earth where you can see hundreds of Batmans, Captain Americas, Starfleet Officers, Supermans, Princess Elsas, Princess Leias, Princess Zeldas, warriors from every genre of fiction and the Ghostbusters' Ectomobile all in one room. For fans of comic books, science fiction and fantasy, cosplay (playing around in costumes), Star Trek, Star Wars and just about any other related genre, Comiccon 2014 was like Christmas, New Year's Eve and Halloween all wrapped up into one.

Montreal's comic-book convention is now in its sixth year and once again took the city by storm September 12-14, bringing in over 51,000 to celebrate pop culture fandom and elaborate costumery.

What used to be more of comic-book exchange has now become one of the biggest fan-meet-celebrity events in the world.

This year's exhibition included a first-ever event with the entire cast from Star Trek: The Next Generation, Matt Smith from Dr. Who, Hulk Hogan, Tricia Helfer and Katee Sackhoff from Battlestar Galactica, Steven Amell and Katie Cassidy from Arrow, Osric Chau from Supernatural, Billy Boyd from Lord of the Rings, Danny Glover, Robert Englund (Freddy Kruger), Stan Lee and Peter Dinklage and Lena Headey from Game of Thrones, to name only a few.

With hundreds of celebrities, comic-book writers and lookalikes that fans could get their pictures taken

with, endless amounts of fan merchandise (like miniatures, books and play weapons) to purchase, special events, and video-game testing, Comiccon is a three-day fan-driven frenzy of fun.

We arrived in the early afternoon to see hundreds of fans queued up all the way around Palais des Congrès, many of whom had paid for special VIP access to attend special events in the convention centre's upper chambers.

While press were not allowed in for the first few hours, when we were finally granted access we decided to peruse the convention floor to check out the goods for sale and see what we could glean from the many vendors and creators who lined the convention hall floors.

According to Craig, a book vendor who makes the rounds at these events, the hottest sellers at these conventions are the comics and graphic novels.

"The biggest book saga right now is Justice League and Batman, Walking Dead, Image, Black Science Zero, and Adventure Time books, which I sell a lot of," he said.

Going through the other merchandise tables, this year's hot-ticket item was the "costume hoodie," which is like the Cadillac of ornate hoodies, often with a mask embedded into the hood. They are very "trippy," and very expensive, often costing \$80 a pop.

While checking out the celebrity meet-and-greet section, we met Traci Lords, the teen porn star turned





And representing the Nation?



Lateef Martin



TV/film actress turned singer turned writer who was there to sign autographs and talk about her life. She said she was “thrilled” to be in Montreal but didn’t say much beyond that. She was one of the celebrities people could meet if they queued up to do so but most of those tables were vacant at the time of our arrival.

We had travelled to this event with our 2½-year-old son, who enjoyed the convention immensely. As my son was checking out something behind me, Lords looked down at the empty stroller I was pushing, joking that I had lost my baby.

I replied, “Oh, he is just walking around.” She laughed and said it’s the strangest thing when that happens. It was a startlingly human moment amid the mania that is this kind of event, but this is what most fans are after – a connection with a celebrity and a glimpse of a rare moment of their humanity.

Ottawa’s Comic Book Shop had a well-stocked kiosk. Since hoodies are all the rage, they had Dr. Doom, Captain America, various Transformers, Magneto, Ghost Rider and many other of high-end hoodies.

According to Robb, the owner of the two-store chain, he attends these types of events all over the place, hitting up 16 Cons a year.

At the heart of the convention centre stood an immense tower of caging erected by the people at styleonline.com that sported fan T-shirts of almost any

variety under the sun. According to salesperson Jeff, their biggest sellers were the costume hoodies and he pulled out what he affectionately called the “walking carpet,” a reversible Han Solo/ Chewbacca the Wookiee hoodie. His other big seller was the “winter is coming” Game of Thrones hoodie, and after last year’s winter, this wasn’t a shock.

When it comes to gear, costuming and cosplay supplies that are sold at this event, we encountered all sorts of incredible items, many of which were just the ticket for those looking to dress up in the garb of yesteryear, particularly for Live Action Role Playing (LARP).

Martial Grisé from Au Dragon Noir was selling the products that are central to this lifestyle.

“I am a leather smith and a writer of fantasy novels and so the weapons that I make in leather and foam are actually what appear in the story. The company that makes these is Calimacil in Sherbrooke ([www.fr.calimacil.ca](http://www.fr.calimacil.ca)), they sell these play ‘weapons’ for LARP games to clients all over the world. The books are francophone, but also have a large following,” said Grisé.

Other vendors were selling Hollywood-quality masks and authentic-looking play armour. The interesting thing about this stuff was that, as there is still an active film industry in Montreal, many of these ateliers now sell to companies producing both high- and low-budget films.



G inch Gooch Girl

Other vendors sell materials to fans looking to make their own stuff. William, for instance, offers skins and pelts for those looking to make their own cosplay gear. He had a surprising amount of animal-based raw materials that included rabbit pelts, treated and patterned leathers and cow horns that could be fashioned into a variety of accessories.

Many who attend the event one year get so caught up with the whole cosplay thing that they return the following year in costume. Those who are really into this can spend hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars becoming the character of their dreams.

Among the many other weird and wonderful vendors who were selling comic-book-character-related goods: Neil Rohr from Ginch Gonch, who was selling comic-book-themed underwear for adults; Guillaume of Grendel Design, who was selling the most jaw-dropping beautiful refurbished lacquer tables, canvases and other refurbished goods (grendel design/facebook); and then the lovely ladies from Love Poetry Corsets (lovepoetrycorsets.com).

According to Jacquie, who was busy tying up a spectacular, hand-painted corset around the waist of a 40-something woman, this company makes everything from the Victorian to the Edwardian style of corset and beyond.

"There is a demand for cosplay. We have artists who hand paint a lot of our corsets and so we can design them to any standard, be it Superman-themed or for a wedding. A lot of people want them because

they help create the shape and form they want for their cosplay outfit," she said.

We then ran into Daniel Bernard, a local comic-book artist we interviewed last year who pens *The Chieftains*, which is based on a reimagining of the life of Deborah, Prophet of God, Fourth Judge of Israel. It was interesting to find out just how one gets this kind of project off the ground in 2014.

According to him, crowd sourcing – a form of online fundraising – is central to funding his project. He collected donations for months to be able to get the project off the ground, and now the first issue is out.

"Slowly but surely we are gaining in popularity through social media. We have our issues on sale at Etsy now and so you can get digital or physical copies. We are hoping that this will move things online a bit better. We sell them for \$6.99 online but cheaper at the Cons," said Bernard.

Two tables over, Latief Martin, another local comic-book author/producer for *Zile*, which is about an apocalypse in Montreal, explained how he had also run a campaign through social media but actually sold spots in the comic for contributors to become immortalized as actual characters within the project.

"I wanted to put Montreal on the map for an apocalypse. We are so used to seeing New York, L.A. and San Francisco in stories and they are all iconic cities, but Montreal is an iconic city too. I really wanted to bring up the Montreal flavour, so we did an





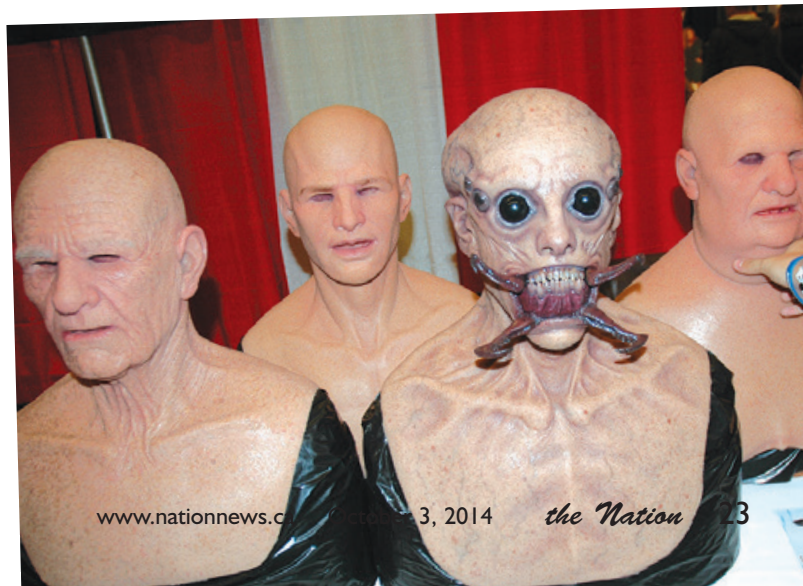
Playful Pokemon Cosplay

Indygogo.com campaign where our goal was \$6000 to draw the first six issues. I am drawing it," said Martin.

"This comic is populated by the people who contributed to it. We have not just done their faces but actual character profiles, back stories, looked at the weapons that they would chose, what their weaknesses would be and got photos for photo references. They are an intricate part of the story and they have ownership here. We have over 100 characters in the comic."

Poring through the pages of these two Montreal comics, it was great to see the high quality of the local works. Both these handmade publications, which were just dreams a mere year or two ago, could easily be sold by a major distributor.

While there are thousands who go to these events as fans to celebrate their fandom with the like-minded, seeing the products of local artists and what they do to put Montreal on the map is inspirational as their characters may one day end up being some of the most popular at these conventions.







## Quebec's tears

### Investigating cases of missing and murdered women in Quebec

by Jesse Staniforth

When people hear the phrase “missing and murdered Native women,” too often they think of British Columbia’s Highway of Tears and the horrors of Robert Pickton. But a new initiative by the Quebec Native Women’s Association (QNWA) hopes to change that by surveying Aboriginal communities about women who have disappeared or been murdered in Quebec.

Though lacking funds for a broad-based search through each of the province’s First Nations communities, the organization began this summer with an overarching survey that will lead to a report to be published soon. The most startling discovery, said QNWA Justice Coordinator Alana Boileau, was the lack of awareness.

“What [we] found is that a lot of people feel as though they don’t really know what’s going on in Quebec versus all the information about what’s happening out west,” she explained. “The issue of missing and murdered Native women, because of the way it’s been portrayed in the media, has become sensationalized and

become a catchphrase where people think of kidnapping, brutal murders, mysterious and unresolved deaths.”

But the problem is more complicated than that, Boileau said. It extends to violence within communities, and to the institutional racism against Aboriginal people that prevents proper investigations from taking place. She railed against Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s assertion that most cases of missing and murdered women have been solved, and his government’s commitment to spend money on a DNA database to help identify bodies of women.

“First of all,” she said, “the database is a reaction to people that have disappeared and does nothing for preventing disappearances. It’s not enough. It’s wonderful that it might allow closure for people who have lost someone, but it does nothing to prevent [future losses], which is what we’re aiming for.”

However, a more disturbing question is why Native women, who make up 4% of the population, are vic-



victims of 16% of female murder victims in Canada.

"Whether these murders are resolved or not," she said, "there's a disproportionate amount. And one murder is too many, but this is ridiculous. For [Harper] to claim this is not a sociological issue is just unfathomable."

While this is far from the first research on missing and murdered women, Boileau points out that it fills a gap for information about the issue in Quebec – particularly in the French-language media, where the subject is rarely discussed. She also notes that the context of Quebec offers specific challenges, such as the existence here of Aboriginal police corps operating in Native communities. While often violence against Indigenous women takes place at the hands of white men, it also takes place among Native people in their own communities. In those instances, local police can complicate the situation if they have not been properly trained.

"One of the things that has come up is the challenge of addressing violence in communities where a lot of times people are related to the police officers, or they know them," she explained. "The solution is definitely not to bring in police who don't know the communities, but we need to have very serious conversations about how to ethically intervene with people that we know. How do we create relationships where women feel comfortable calling the police if the perpetrator of violence against them is, say, a police officer's brother?"

In Eeyou Istchee, the QNWA surveys were conducted among the membership of the Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association (CWEIA) during the AGA in Whapmagoostui September 6-7, said association President Virginia Wabano. "Christine Petawabano did the presentation," she said. "We had repre-

sentation from all of the communities at the AGA."

Donald Nicholls, Director of Justice for the Cree Nation Government, said the CNG supports the initiative and hopes to see it widened in Eeyou Istchee under the guidance of the CWEIA.

"What we [told the QNWA] was that we would help out in whatever way we could, but that ideally it should be the local chapters of the CWEIA that should give the surveys – they can do it in our Justice facilities, or wherever they want, but we could be around to help with that, because it's such an important initiative. We think that it should come from the communities and be local – there should be someone there who can provide support in case there's healing that's needed, or in case it brings up other issues."

Nicholls, however, stressed that he felt the definition of "missing" should extend as far back as the residential schools era, in which many children died or disappeared and their families were often not given basic information surrounding those losses.

"We also recommended to them that they should propose training to SQ units that are around Native reserves to heighten their awareness of the issue itself," Nicholls explained. "So they can be more vigilant, and be sure that the numbers of murdered or missing Aboriginal women and children don't increase."

Boileau agrees that recognizing that children who disappeared from residential schools is a part of acknowledging a history of disregard for Aboriginal life among Canadian government and institutions. However, she says that at the moment her organization is concerned about widening the focus of their research too broadly.



"By making it too large and conflating issues," she said, "we run the risk of losing ourselves in terms of how we address it. I don't believe that the same kinds of measures can be taken if we're addressing someone whose mother disappeared during residential school versus someone whose sister was murdered by a white man. These aren't the same issues, even though they have similar impacts in terms of what it means to lose someone violently or mysteriously."

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# Cree School Board grad rates down

## Exam pass rates drop across the board

by Jeremy East

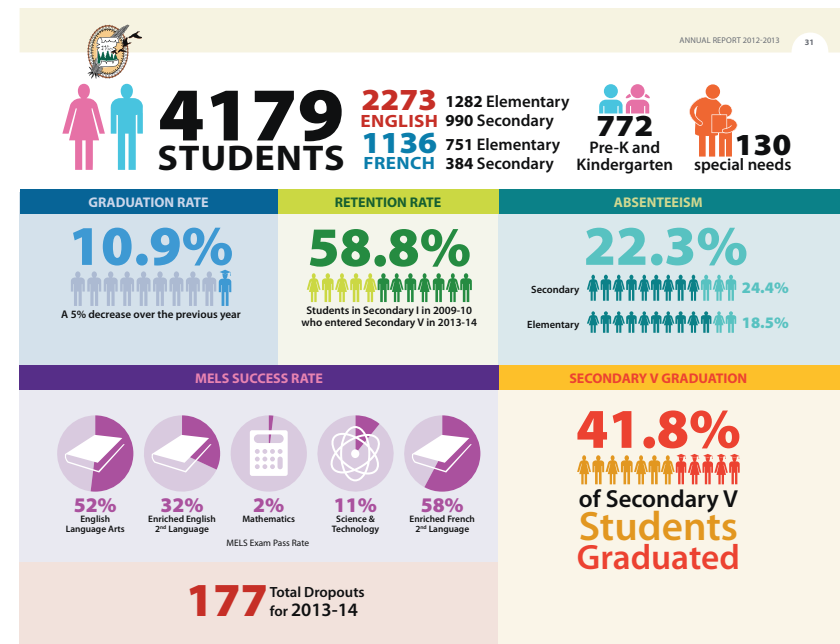
The Cree School Board's (CSB) latest Annual Report reveals that student success significantly declined across the Cree Nation during the 2012-2013 school year.

The CSB has struggled over the last decade to increase graduation rates, particularly among those working towards a high school diploma. But the CSB report's analysis of the 2012-2013 academic year indicates that the overall five-year graduation rate decreased from 15.9% to 10.9%.

To obtain a high school diploma, students must pass several required exams. According to the report, pass rates in all of those exams have fallen. Only 52% of students passed their Secondary V English Language Arts exam in 2012-2013, compared to a 90.5% pass rate the year before. In the Secondary V French Second Language Enriched exam, the pass rate dropped from 100% to 58% overall.

Plummeting pass rates weren't restricted to the language sector. Fewer students passed their Math and Science exams than in previous years as well. The Secondary IV Mathematics exam was passed by only 2% of students, down from 12.4% the year before. Pass rates for the Secondary IV Science and Technology exam dropped from 17.6% to 11%.

Results from the Canadian Achievement Test, an annual math and reading test taken by students in Grade 6 and Secondary III, were equally disappointing. Pass rates



for Grade 6 students were 15% and 17% for reading and math, respectively. Those numbers did not come close to the 35% pass rate the CSB had set as a goal. For Secondary III students, the target was a 45% pass rate, but only 5% of students passed their reading exams.

There were some bright spots in the report, including a 41.8% pass rate among all registered Secondary V students. However, this number included all graduating students, regardless of their age or the number of years they had spent working toward their diploma.

The CSB has steadily increased the five-year grad rate since 2009-2010, when it hit a low of 1.6%. The report identifies student

engagement as an essential part of helping their students to achieve academic success. A relatively small 2.2% increase in absenteeism shows that students are still coming to school at a consistent rate. Another notable positive in the report was a 6.3% increase in the retention rates for high school students. This year, 58.8% of all students who started Secondary I in the 2009-2010 academic year entered Secondary V in 2013-14.

The report also recognized the departure of Joe MacNeil from the CSB after 32 years as an employee. MacNeil served as Deputy Director General before his retirement at the beginning of the year.

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## Successful summer readers

### CSB Summer Literacy Camps grow in second year

by Amy German

The Cree School Board Summer Literacy Camp program really hit its stride this year with results topping last summer's encouraging participation numbers.

The camps, which were held in all nine communities, topped last year's by bringing in a total of 464 campers, an increase of 50. Each child read an average of nine books, and 12 counsellors from the program were hired locally.

Melanie Valcin is the Quebec Manager for Frontier College, which is the partner and program provider to the Cree School Board for the Summer Literacy Camps. Valcin said this year's camps were a success because they were able to take what they learned in 2013 to make 2014 an even more successful camp season.

"Slowly the awareness in the communities of what the camp is

about and what we are trying to do is getting through," said Valcin. "I think that parents and community members are, after a second year, really beginning to see the benefits of having the kids in the camp."

According to the preliminary data from the program and the surveys done by parents, campers and counsellors: 74% of campers said that they like reading more after attending the Summer Literacy Camp; all of the parents surveyed said that their children had improved literacy and social skills; and all of the camp counsellors surveyed said that they had noticed positive behaviours in the children.

Several local retailers gave the camps discounts on purchasing supplies and snacks for the children, enabling the hiring of more Cree youth for the program. Some of



those hired were individuals who already work in the local schools so the children were able to benefit from their pre-established relationships.

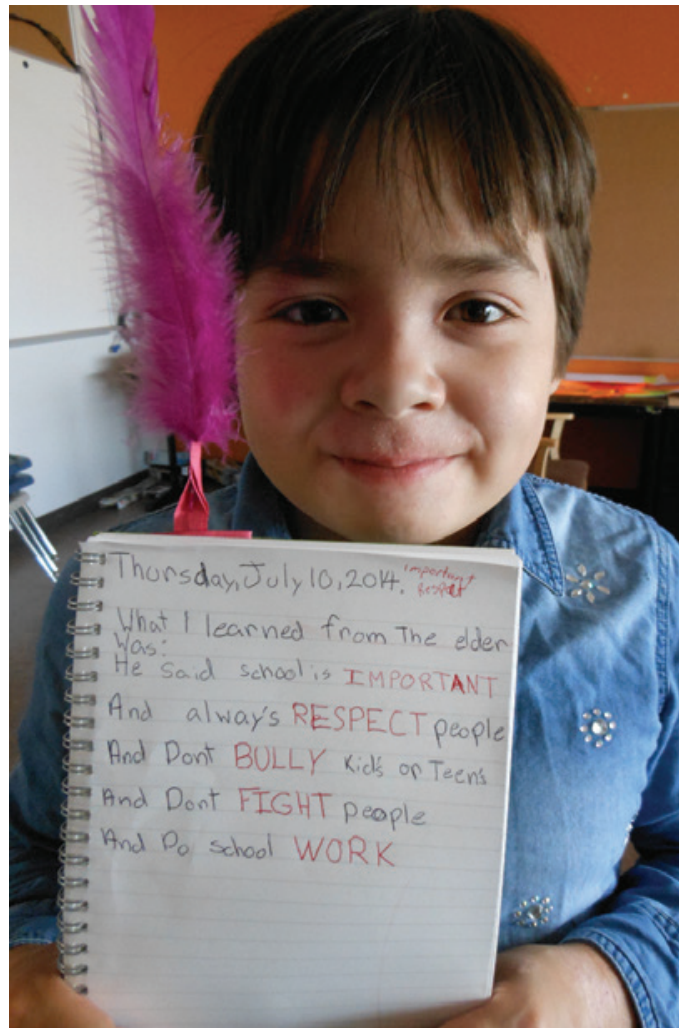
"We were (also) able to hire quite a few post-secondary students like some of the Cree students from Mistissini who are studying at Concordia University (in Montreal) and then another two who are studying at Canadore College (in North Bay, Ontario). These people are great role models for the children," said Valcin.

As one goal of the camp is to prevent summer learning loss, participating children enjoyed days that were filled with fun-learning activities and special-learning projects that were individual to each community.

Valcin said the group in Nemaska created a beautiful comic book using children's stories and drawings, while those in other communities created music videos.

The success of last year's camp encouraged the community of Kuujuarapik to create its own literacy camps with Frontier. Children in nearby Whapmagoostui became pen pals and enjoyed weekly activities with their Inuit neighbours, forging new bonds.

"All of these projects are geared at keeping the kids from summer learning loss but at the same time, by the end of the summer these kids feel as though reading isn't a chore but is something that they need to succeed and go further to learn and share and express themselves," said Valcin.



## Scots Wha Hae!

### BORDER LINES

by Lyle Stewart

There are few family names as Scottish as mine. There are five Scots tartan patterns for Stewart clans, and two more for those who spell it Stuart.

That heritage doesn't necessarily make me Scottish. I'm one of millions worldwide who can claim at least some Scottish ancestry (including a large number of Crees in Eeyou Istchee), a diaspora that outnumbers the current population of Scotland. And, like most, I've never been to Scotland, nor do I know any relatives who speak in their famous brogue.

For that reason, I initially kept my emotional distance from the referendum campaign on independence for Scotland. I love the sound of bagpipes, but living in Quebec, I wasn't very interested in an ethnocentric nationalism for its own sake. Our collective nightmare over the Charter of Quebec Values was enough to make any nationalism look tainted, even that of my own "people."

Besides, for most of the campaign that ended dramatically September 18, it looked like the pro-inde-



pendence campaign had little chance of success. Then, a few weeks before the vote, something clicked. Along with people around the world, I started paying more attention because it was clear something special was happening.

People realized this wasn't about a choice between "us and them." Or about a bunch of kilt-wearing, haggis-munching cultural snobs shouting "Scotland for the Scots!" Indeed, many of the leading figures in the Scotland independence campaign wore turbans and hijabs, but were considered no less Scottish for it.

Rather, it was about the ability of a nation to be free of the economic destruction that a series of right-wing governments in London have waged on the rest of the United Kingdom since the days of Margaret Thatcher. While the toffs in London thrive, the regions of Great Britain have withered as wealth is

ever more concentrated in the financial casino economy of the south. That's something that people around the world can identify with.

Here was an opportunity, people began to see, of building a better, more egalitarian society, one in which almost all of a nation's wealth is not concentrated in an ever-smaller number of hands. It began to make practical sense. If Scotland's weight in the British Parliament was not enough to help the UK turn from its self-destructive path, why not build one's own road to a more sensible future?

Suddenly, it looked like the independence campaign had a real shot of winning. A few polls showed the Yes campaign with a small lead. All the momentum seemed to swing toward the promise of a future Scotland finally free of the sad history of slaughter and oppression that it has known under the English crown. The proof of that is the panic that ensued in the British government of David Cameron and the declining value of the pound.

That's when the campaign started to resemble the 1995 referendum in Quebec, as govern-

actually comes to pass. If London reneges on its promises, the example of Quebec shows that another referendum is always possible.

It's a story the Cree of Eeyou Istchee can identify with, at least in part. Since the 1970s the Cree leadership has recognized that cultural and political survival depends on economic sovereignty – the same goal as the Scottish nationalists.

Step by step, the Crees have gathered economic powers under their control, increasing their political strength along the way. It hasn't come in one fell swoop as the Scottish National Party had hoped,

but there is a lesson they can learn from their Cree cousins.

But if the Cree have taken smaller but steadier steps toward their own sovereignty, there is a dark cloud on the horizon. The Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (known as FIPA), ratified in September by the

"Since the 1970s the Cree leadership has recognized that cultural and political survival depends on economic sovereignty – the same goal as the Scottish nationalists."

ment figures rushed north to promise devolution and blue skies forever if the Scots voted No... and to threaten fire and brimstone if they dared to vote Yes. As in Quebec, it worked, just enough, as the final vote came in at 55% to 45% against independence.

Nonetheless, all major parties in the British Parliament – the governing Conservative/Liberal-Democrat coalition and the opposition Labour Party – made firm promises to deliver powers of self-rule to the Scottish Parliament in Holyrood. And this, at least, will be a silver lining to a lost dream if it

Harper government, threatens to undo much of this progress and thrust the Cree Nation back into the subjugation that the Scots have known under London's domination.

FIPA overrides existing treaty obligations to First Nations, and would enable Chinese investors to gain access to Indigenous territories and resources. This deal could come to resemble the 1707 Act of Union that brought Scotland under England's thumb for a package of promises that turned out to be worthless. And if that is the case, the Cree may soon be looking more closely at the Scottish example.



## Safe meat

### Best handling practices for traditional meat storage

As many families have already hit the bush for the fall hunt season to feed their families over the winter months, the Cree Board of Health and Social Services thought that it would be timely to get some safe meat handling tips out.

According to Lilian Kandiliotis, a Regional Public Health Nutritionist/Dietician, there are a number of basic guidelines when it comes to keeping meat at its best quality for later consumption when out in the bush.

While out in the bush and handling fresh kills, gloves are a must as some animals can carry diseases such as tularemia or rabbit fever. Some bears carry trichinosis, which can be passed on to humans. All meats should be cooled quickly with ice packs or snow in the internal cavity and animals that seem visibly sick or abnormal should not be handled.

"If you come upon a sick animal, notify your game warden and the CTA," said Kandiliotis. "They can share the information with us. They can help send the meat for testing to see what disease is affecting it, and protect our hunters, our community members."

She said hunters should avoid lead shot, as lead is a contaminant. She also reminds hunters to wear bright clothing and safety gear, and to wear lifejackets while in boats and never to overload a boat so that it doesn't capsize.

According to Kandiliotis, the department of Public Health always likes to encourage Crees to choose traditional food over anything else because it has so many benefits.

"The best traditional food you can get is the one you get yourself: the one you hunt, active in the bush because it keeps you in shape," said Kandiliotis.

And, she said, the best way to prepare this meat is through the traditional methods for respectfully butchering an animal, a tradition and practice that has been taught to Crees by their families and Elders for

centuries as this supports and promotes Cree culture and teachings.

With that said, getting back to gloves, it isn't just about wearing them while handling the meat but while doing so one should avoid touching their face and mouth when gutting and butchering the animals because animals can carry diseases that can be passed on.

"To avoid cross contamination when handling meats, wipe down your knives at gutting and clean knives between gutting and butchering and also between animals. You can use rubbing alcohol to disinfect and rinse with fresh water and dry with clean cloth," said Kandiliotis.

During the transport of a fresh kill, black garbage bags should be avoided because they have chemicals in the linings which can cause a chemical contamination of the meat. As an alternative, Kandiliotis suggested a clean tarp or food grade white or clear food storage bags.

"You can get food grade bakers' bags from the food wholesale suppliers who do business with our communities, order through your local COOP or grocery store or hardware store. The food grade bags are recommended for the storage of meats as well. You can wrap the meat in cheesecloth for field dressing. Cheesecloth is available at your local hardware store and that can be used too," said Kandiliotis.

When preparing these meats at home, if you are uncertain about whether your meat is cooked properly, a meat thermometer can end a guessing game. As a rule of thumb, cooked meats should be 74C (165F) or hotter.

Kandiliotis said that the traditional cooking methods of the Cree are actually well suited for food safety, as traditionally Crees have always cooked food until it is very well done and this is the best practice for killing bacteria.





“What we need to be careful about is to not let food sit at room temperature for a long time. Keep it hot till you eat it. This is especially true for feasts and community gatherings. Cooked foods should be kept above 60C and cold food between 0-4C. Frozen foods should be stored at -18C or less,” said Kandiliotis.

As a good hunt can yield a great deal of meat, when preparing it for freezer storage, Kandiliotis said that a good method is to wrap the meat in butcher paper and then in a food grade plastic bag. And, when putting it into the freezer bag, to try to squeeze as much air out of the bag as possible to maintain meat quality and avoid freezer burn.

“Some people use aluminum wrap, this keeps the air out well, but it’s a pain to get it off when it thaws out. By far, vacuum packing keeps the quality of meats fresher for longer, but it is expensive because you have to buy the machine and the bags are also expensive, but the results are superior,” said Kandiliotis.

Once the freezer reserves have been depleted, it is a good idea to clean a freezer by melting the frost and then giving it a good scrub to remove debris, blood and residue. This also helps the freezer function better, which improves food preservation. If possible this should be done once a year or more.

As for thawing, the safest method is always in the refrigerator as that is where bacteria is least

likely to grow. If that isn’t possible, meat can also be thawed under cool running water in the sink if the meat is sealed. It can also be done in the microwave if the meat is to be cooked immediately. Food can also always be cooked from frozen. What is not suggested is leaving it out on the counter, as that is where bacteria can really grow.

The CBHSSJB offers training for food safety certifications for all food handlers, food service administrators, and also traditional food safety, which is a joint project with local Cree Elders and the CTA, as well as veterinarian pathologists.

For those interested, an event will be held in the spring of 2015 and, more information is available through Public Health.



# Meditation on a tractor

by Xavier Kataquapit

Lately, I've been thinking of buying a tractor. I can't afford a new one so I'm looking for an older, used farm tractor. The older I get the more I think I am turning into my dad. Marius was always searching for an interesting machine he could add to his fleet in order to make life easier.

The very first tractor I remember was a huge old red Massey Ferguson that was owned by Reg Louttit. He used it to run a portable sawmill to help produce lumber. The next tractor I came across was one that my dad purchased on a trip to Moosonee. I faintly remember that old David Brown tractor, as I was only about seven years old. I recall that it was rusty looking with white trim and a front bucket. I think it came back on the winter road as that was the only way to transport something that big to Attawapiskat other than by barge in the summer.

Dad used that old David Brown to assist him with the general contracting work he did around town. One business he started was transporting water. He picked up an old broken-down trailer, welded it back together then attached a 400-gallon tank. He used it to fetch water from the river by pump and then delivered it to community homes for a price. Back then in the early 1980s nobody had running water or indoor plumbing. We were just a short airplane ride from Timmins to the south yet we were still living as though it was the 1930s.

Soon after he purchased a newer John Deere tractor and a few trailers. At that point he started a company to

haul cargo from the airport to the Hudson Bay store (before it became the Northern Store). He had established a family business with the two tractors and trailers. My brothers and I joined in to help dad run the business.

I was 12 when my older brothers introduced me to the fine art of driving a tractor. I started by hauling an empty trailer then progressed to one with a load. Soon I was an active participant in the Marius Kataquapit and Sons contracting business.

Dad also got the contract to haul cargo that came in on the summer barge. It shipped out from Moosonee and made a couple of trips a season. To make things more interesting for us he also built two trailers to hold 1,000-gallon tanks that he used to transport fuel from the barge and then across the community to the Northern Store. They had one of two gas stations in town.

When I was a teenager my dad purchased a brand new Ford New Holland tractor. Business had been good and he rewarded himself by investing in this new tractor. He brought it up on the winter road and we were all very impressed that it was new, had a bucket and a fork lift attachment. It also had an enclosed cab with air conditioning for those few hot weeks of summer and heating for the long winter months. That tractor became a big part of my life as I drove it almost every day hauling cargo, making trips on the winter road to Moosonee and dragging a huge tank filled with water around the community in the summer to keep the dust down. I became known as the dust buster.

I got very good at handling that tractor and eventually I could do just about anything that a job demanded. As my dad got older he worked less and less though he always kept his foot in the business. My brothers expanded it, purchasing more equipment to fulfil the needs of a growing transport and cargo company. Today my brother Paul mainly runs the company and is hard at work keeping our dad's dream alive.

When I am passing farm fields these days I keep an eye out for one of those trusty, yet rusty old tractors that made my dad's eyes sparkle with delight. Who knows? Maybe I will find a good deal and take it back to the cottage. I am sure it would be useful in many odd jobs I do these days. Most of all, I just miss the feel of an old tractor under me as I run the engine through the gears and stay busy moving things here and there. It is like meditation.



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# Michael J. Mianscum

“ I have fought the good fight,  
I have finished the race,  
I have kept the faith. ” Timothy 4-7



Cree Human Resources Development Department (CHRD) has been saddened by the loss of long-time employee Michael Mianscum. Michael J. Mianscum was diagnosed with cancer 9 months ago, and after a hard fought battle, passed away on Thursday, September 4, 2014, at the young age of 39. For more than 13 years, Michael was a steadfast member of the Territorial Programs team as the Sectoral Officer for telecommunications and transport. He came to CHRD after years of working at the Troilus mine and brought with him a keen understanding of what working outside the community meant to our clients.

In his position as Sectoral Officer, Michael was pivotal in helping the team grow in experience, and a key factor in pushing CHRD towards continued improvement from year to year. Michael was a consummate team player, having taken the lead role in over 200 programs and working with more than 2000 participants over the years. The numbers speak to his importance to CHRD and he will be greatly missed but never forgotten. We will always remember his contribution and willingness to assume greater roles to help his people. We will miss his personality, his spectacular sense of humour, but most of all we will miss him as a colleague and a friend.

Beyond his role as a Sectoral Officer, Michael Mianscum was a proud father of three daughters; Jennifer, Whitney, Hazel, a son Francois, and husband to Demerise Loon for 20 years. An active community member, Michael loved to spend his weekends fishing, and being out on the land.

The team at CHRD would like to send their sincere condolences to his family during this difficult time.

**Rest in peace, Michael.**



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